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The Tester Engagement Pocket Map

Introduction

Maintaining tester engagement is one of the biggest challenges facing today's user testing professionals, with more than *half reporting issues securing useful feedback*. It's a big concern for professionals, since the ability to deliver informed product recommendations lives or dies with the amount of relevant and contextual feedback (*e.g., issues, ideas, praise*) coming in during *delta testing*.

At the same time, getting high-quality feedback isn't the only measure of tester engagement during your project. Testers participate in a myriad of ways — from using your product and completing weekly activities, to commenting or voting on suggestions. Paying attention to all of these engagement signals holistically is key to keeping customer insights flowing in.

One of the most important things to keep in mind is that testers have a *finite amount of energy* to tap into during your test. To make the most of that energy and keep them engaged with what's happening in your project, it's essential to look carefully at

- who you're recruiting,
- how you're communicating with them,
- the methods you're using to engage, and
- the overall state of your product.

This ebook will give you a practical approach for tackling each one of these key components with:

A map of the journey your testers take through your project, with tactics for increasing tester engagement at each phase of CV

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A cheat sheet to help you recognize even the more subtle warning signs of poor tester engagement on the journey and diagnose the underlying cause

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A detailed overview and quick fixes for each of the four most common underlying causes of low engagement

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The Ideal Tester Journey: Your Map to Maximizing Engagement

Achieving high engagement for your CV project is like taking a roadtrip: when you have a map, a plan, and the right people along for the ride, it's a smooth journey to your destination.

1 Gathering Your Travelers

Your Testers Are:
Applying for opportunities in your community

What's the Goal?
Attract qualified test applicants

Your Strategy:
- Define your test objectives and tester selection criteria
- Advertise your project opportunity wherever you connect with your customers
- Screen for the right testers via a qualification survey

Engagement Payoff:
- Interested, qualified applicants for your test
- Key information to help you select the best testers



2 Getting Ready to Go

Your Testers Are:
Completing the necessary steps to join your project

What's the Goal?
Set testers up for success

Your Strategy:
- Ensure testers complete the necessary agreements (e.g., NDAs)
- Send a welcome letter that includes clear participation expectations

Engagement Payoff:
- Well-informed and excited testers who understand how to provide valuable feedback during your project

3 Having a Good Trip

Your Testers Are:
Using your product and providing feedback

What's the Goal?
Generate high volumes of relevant feedback

Your Strategy:
- Give testers an easy way to submit feedback (e.g., via forms)
- Ask testers to complete weekly topics and activities
- Remind testers when activities are incomplete
- Be responsive, supportive, and encouraging to testers at every opportunity

Engagement Payoff:
- Detailed, quality feedback that covers each of your key product areas
- Real-world product usage metrics

4 Wrapping Things Up

Your Testers Are:
Giving their final impressions of your product

What's the Goal?
Make sure your testers feel valued

Your Strategy:
- Send testers a sincere thank you message
- Provide clear product return instructions (if applicable)
- Reward your testers with incentives within a couple weeks of your project ending

Engagement Payoff:
- Your testers' informed, holistic impressions of your product as a whole
- Testers who are excited to test for you again

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Diagnosing Common Engagement Problems During Your Project

Struggling with low tester engagement? Take stock of the symptoms and get under the hood to identify the real reason behind the rattle in your customer feedback engine.



Warning Signs
- Testers are confused, slow to respond, or completely unresponsive
- There's a sharp drop-off in feedback after the first or second week
- Feedback is vague (e.g., "It's broken.") or lacks specific details
- Testers send angry replies to activity reminder emails
- You're missing feedback about key product areas

The underlying cause

Communication is breaking down between you and your testers

Warning Signs
- Consistent communication doesn't increase the quality or amount of feedback
- Testers say that they wouldn't/don't use key product features
- Testers aren't completing all of the test activities
- Too much of your feedback is impractical or irrelevant

The underlying cause

Your testers are not enthusiastic users from your product's target market

Warning Signs
- There is a very low amount of incoming feedback
- Testers are not completing all of their weekly activities
- Feedback doesn't have logs, troubleshooting files, or steps to reproduce
- You're not getting enough of certain feedback types (usually ideas and praise)

The underlying cause

404 ERROR

Project tools and structures are causing excessive friction

Warning Signs
- Testers report being unable to complete activities
- Testers aren't submitting ideas or praise
- Product usage is low overall
- You're seeing a large number of duplicates for critical issues

The underlying cause

Your product isn't ready for external testing

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Exploring Your Diagnosis:

Communication Is Breaking Down Between You and Your Testers

How do your testers know what to do during your project? How do they know when a survey is due or that the test is coming to an end? Tester communication encompasses interactions at every stage of your project. It's crucial for developing your testing culture, *setting confidentiality expectations*, educating your testers on how to participate in your test, directing them to the product areas where you need feedback, and so much more.

Because communication is such a mission-critical piece of your engagement strategy, the **methods, tone, clarity, and frequency of your communications** has a big impact on participation during your test.



Warning Signs of Communication Breakdown

Testers are unresponsive. Testers often stop engaging with a project when they don't have a clear understanding of *what they're expected to do*.

Sharp drop-off in feedback. While there will be a natural decline in feedback after the first week of testing, a sudden drop-off during your test indicates that your testers may need educational resources to guide their efforts.

Feedback is vague or lacks specific detail. Similarly, when you get feedback like "The product doesn't work," it might mean your testers need guidance on how to provide *helpful feedback*.

Testers send angry responses to activity reminders. Vague instructions, failure to follow up, and sporadic communication confuses testers and may cause them to lash out in frustration.

You're missing feedback in key product areas. Without direction and guidance, your testers can't reasonably know which features and product areas you need them to cover.



Easy Fix Checklist:

Check Your Emails. If feedback is dropping off, review your messaging and email communications. Are you giving clear and concise directions on what to do? Are you quick and responsive with follow-ups to questions? Are you expressing gratitude for the time and effort your testers are putting in?

Check Your Topics. If you're missing key product feedback, look at how you've mapped out your *topics and activities*. Do you have specific tasks for testers to complete in relation to the feature experiences or product areas you care about most?

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Exploring Your Diagnosis:

Your Testers Are Not Enthusiastic Users from Your Target Market

There are two main traits that have a direct impact on your testers' level of engagement during your project. Recruiting testers who are both in your target market and have a *genuine interest in testing* your product is critical to getting relevant, detailed feedback.

Testers who come into your project half-heartedly will be reluctant to put forth any effort, making it difficult for you to get the data you need. *Target market testers* have an organic reason for using your product because it's been built with their needs in mind. That's why it's much easier to keep them using it and providing useful insights throughout your project.

Testers who aren't members of your target audience are less likely to use your product and provide feedback. They can also derail your efforts with feedback that isn't relevant to your product's success.



Warning Signs of Incompatible Testers

Consistent communication doesn't increase the quality or amount of feedback. Testers who aren't from your target market are naturally less excited about testing your product, which means they're more reluctant to give useful insights — no matter how well you're communicating.

Testers don't/wouldn't use key product features. It's more difficult to engage testers on product areas they say they don't or wouldn't otherwise use. On top of that, any insights they do provide aren't as relevant because their natural behaviors don't line up with your target audience's.

Testers aren't completing all their test activities. Testers who continually fail to complete activities are either showing that they wouldn't naturally use your product the way a member of your target market would, or they're not excited about providing their feedback in the first place.

There's too much impractical or irrelevant feedback. If the majority of the feedback you're receiving is impractical or irrelevant (e.g., use cases that don't make sense for your audience), there may be a mismatch between your testers' attitudes or interests and what your product delivers.



Easy Fix Checklist:

Check Your Recruitment Strategy. If your testers aren't completing their test activities, check your *recruitment strategy*. Did your invitation include a clear and concise product description? Did the questions in your *qualification survey* help you identify enthusiastic applicants and select the ones whose demographic and technographic traits align with your target market?

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Exploring Your Diagnosis:

Project Tools and Structures Are Causing Excessive Friction

Your tools and project structures (*e.g., feedback types and forms*) are the bridge between you and your testers out in the world. Since testers have a finite amount of time and energy to devote to your project, getting healthy participation from testers means keeping that bridge free of obstacles, twists, and turns.

If your tools and structures are disjointed, disorganized, or challenging to access and use, it becomes too difficult and too time-consuming for testers to engage during your project. The fewer hoops testers have to jump through to find information, submit feedback, and communicate with you, the easier it will be to maintain a steady flow of tester data.



Warning Signs of Excessive Friction

There's a very low amount of incoming feedback. This could be a sign that accessing or interacting with your feedback forms is more inconvenient for your testers than they are willing to deal with.

Testers aren't completing weekly activities. If testers are completing fewer and fewer activities, it might be a sign that your activities are structured in a way that is making it too difficult for testers to get through (e.g., there are too many, they are too prescriptive or complicated).

You're getting incomplete surveys or feedback that's missing significant information. This can be a sign that your feedback forms are either too long — taking focus away from the information you really need — or that they don't provide an easy enough way to include the information you need.

You're not getting enough of certain feedback types. If there's not an easy way to share each type of feedback (e.g., issues, ideas, or praise), testers will simply submit feedback however it's most convenient for them. This can create the illusion that you have too much of one type of feedback, or not enough of others.



Easy Fix Checklist:

Check Your Feedback Forms. If you're seeing fewer feedback submissions or too much of any particular feedback type, check your feedback forms. Is there a separate form for each type of feedback? Are they easy to access? Are your forms too long or do they ask for too much information? Are you asking for data that is overly inconvenient for testers to gather?

Check Your Surveys. If you're seeing *too many incomplete surveys*, evaluate how much time and effort it takes to complete your survey. Are there more than 20 questions? Are there more than 4 open-ended questions? Do testers have an easy and obvious way to access the survey?

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Exploring Your Diagnosis:

Your Product Isn't Ready for External Testing

Just like with your project tools and structures, the state of your product has a huge impact on how easy it is for testers to engage during your project. If your product has stopping issues or too many smaller bugs, you'll see tester engagement drop off quickly as testers realize how difficult and time-consuming it is to successfully get through weekly activities and provide feedback.

At the same time, when testers run into areas of your product that haven't been fully developed, it prevents them from experiencing your product the way your future customers will. This takes a toll on how relevant incoming feedback is to your project goals, since tester engagement is just as much about quality as it is about quantity.

Warning Signs That Your Product Isn't Ready

Testers are unable to complete activities. If frequent issues or problems prevent testers from completing their activities, you'll see a sharp decrease in tester engagement.

Testers aren't submitting ideas or praise. If testers encounter too many bugs, the majority of their time will be spent reporting issues. They won't be able to get the full experience of key product features in a way that allows them to provide ideas and praise.

Product usage is low overall. If usage metrics show that target market testers aren't using your product in a meaningful way, it could mean that your product is too buggy or inconvenient for testers to use in the ways they'd naturally want to use it.

There are a large number of duplicates for critical issues. When a significant number of testers report the same blocking issues, it's a clear sign that bugs are interfering with the tester experience.

Easy Fix Checklist:

Check Development Progress. If testers aren't completing activities, make sure your product is substantive enough for testers to truly use. Are you testing a prototype, wireframe, or concept version of your product? Do testers have a tangible, feature-complete product to provide feedback about?

Check Your Testing Phases. Have you done thorough QA tests and dogfooding before putting your product in the hands of customers? Have you already resolved the major issues that came up during QA and dogfooding? Are you aware of any existing product issues that will negatively impact the tester experience?

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Delta Testing Solutions

Leading product ops teams use Centercode to identify real-world issues to fix, areas to improve, and what their users love in order to build amazing products.



Centercode's delta testing platform is built on decades of experience user testing the world's most successful products. Our platform equips you with the automation, best practices, and processes you need to get actionable user insights for any use case.

PRODUCT LAUNCH

Engage your **Target Market** to successfully bring new products and services to market

USE CASES:

- Beta Tests
- User Acceptance Tests
- Field Tests

PRODUCT GROWTH

Recruit **Existing Customers** to continuously mature live products and services

USE CASES:

- Progressive Delivery
- Early Access
- Customer Advisory Boards

CUSTOMER ZERO

Gather **Employee** feedback to enhance your products while fostering a product culture

USE CASES:

- Alpha Tests
- Dogfooding
- Employee Tests

COMPETITIVE EDGE

Enlist **Competitors' Customers** to rapidly gain actionable intel about their products

USE CASES:

- Competitive Intelligence
- Market Testing
- Comparative Research

DELTA TESTING PLATFORM

Get a live demo of Centercode to experience the easy way to run your user tests, including:

- Auto-generated test designs
- Ted, your tester engagement bot
- Smart feedback prioritization
- Instant KPIs and dashboards

SCHEDULE A DEMO

WHY CENTERCODE?

Increase Revenue
½ ☆ INCREASE
in product ratings

Release Sooner
50% FASTER
test cycles

Gain Participation
75% INCREASE
in tester engagement

Save Time
40% + DECREASE
in time managing tests